

Abstract for 'The Semantics and Pragmatics of Co-occurring *o*+LOC and *pro*
Object Referents in Russian'

2013 Midwest Slavic Conference

Andrew J. Kier

This study examines, for the purpose of comparison, the semantic differences between the two main prepositions in modern Russian denoting 'about, concerning' (*o*+LOC and *pro*), in example texts from the Russian National Corpus (RNC) in which the two prepositions co-occur in the same verbal argument, both having the same verb as head—as shown in example (1)—or occurring in parallel slots in adjacent clauses—as shown in example (2):

- (1) *On znal i pro Sergeja Trubeckogo ...*
he-NOM know-M.PST.SG and about Sergej-ANIM.ACC Trubeckij-ANIM.ACC

*i o Evgenii Trubeckom.*¹
and about Evgenij-LOC Trubeckij-LOC

'He knew both about [*pro*] Sergej Trubeckoj and about [*o*] Evgenij Trubeckoj.'

- (1b) *Ty, master, pro den'gi ne dumaj ...*
you-NOM.SG master-NOM.SG about money-ACC.PL NEG think-IMP.SG

*ty o rabote dumaj.*²
you-NOM.SG about work-LOC.SG think-IMP.SG

'Master, don't think about [*pro*] the money—[just] think about [*o*] work.'

Close readings of the several dozen or so co-occurrences in the RNC show that in many of them, there is a semantic/pragmatic opposition between the

¹ Granin, D. (1987) *Zubr*. (RNC)

² Mjasnikov, V. (2000) *Vodka*. (RNC)

o+LOC and *pro* object referent, such that the *pro* object referent is portrayed as narrower in scope, and more holistic than the *o*+LOC object referent, which is portrayed as broader in scope, more analyzed, and of greater complexity than the *pro* object referent.

Historically, a number of Russian linguists and scholars have acknowledged that *o*+LOC and *pro* express slightly different nuances of 'aboutness', and that the exact nature of these nuances has become less clear over time (Peškovskij 1928/2001, Vinogradov 1947/2001). Nevertheless, it appears that within the existing scholarly literature on modern Russian prepositions, there is insufficient explanation of these nuances; most explanations begin and end with the prescriptive pronouncement that *pro* is merely a colloquial synonym of *o*+LOC. However, my analysis of the two prepositions in co-occurrence sentences shows that 1) *pro* is not colloquial in these contexts, and 2) authors who make use of co-occurring *o*+LOC and *pro* object referents employ this semantic difference in order to portray a contrast between the object referents of each preposition, in which the *pro* object referent is presented as being narrower in scope, and more holistic, than the *o*+LOC object referent.

This study is the subject of my doctoral dissertation, presented in December, 2012 in the Dept. of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures, The Ohio State University.

Curriculum Vitae

July 27, 1965.....	Born—Columbus, Ohio
1990.....	Bachelor of Music, Virginia Commonwealth University
1995.....	Master of Arts, Library Science, University of Arizona
1998—present.....	Cataloger/Metadata Specialist, OCLC, Inc., Dublin, Ohio
2006.....	Master of Arts, Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures, The Ohio State University
2013.....	Ph. D., Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures, The Ohio State University

Publications

- Kier, Andrew J. (2006) "On The Origins of the Glagolitic Alphabet." *Ohio Slavic Papers: 6, Proceedings of the Second Graduate Colloquium in Slavic Linguistics*. Columbus, OH: OSU Dept. of Slavic and E. European Languages and Literatures, pp. 177-189.
- (2012) "Instruments of the Old Faith: Three Medieval South Slavic Healing Rites for Snakebite." *Poznanskie Studia Slawistyczne*, 3. Poznan: Adam Mickiewicz University, pp. 75-87.